# Transformed Landscapes

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Essays on Palestine and the Middle East
in Honor of Walid Khalidi

edited by
Camille Mansour
Leila Fawaz

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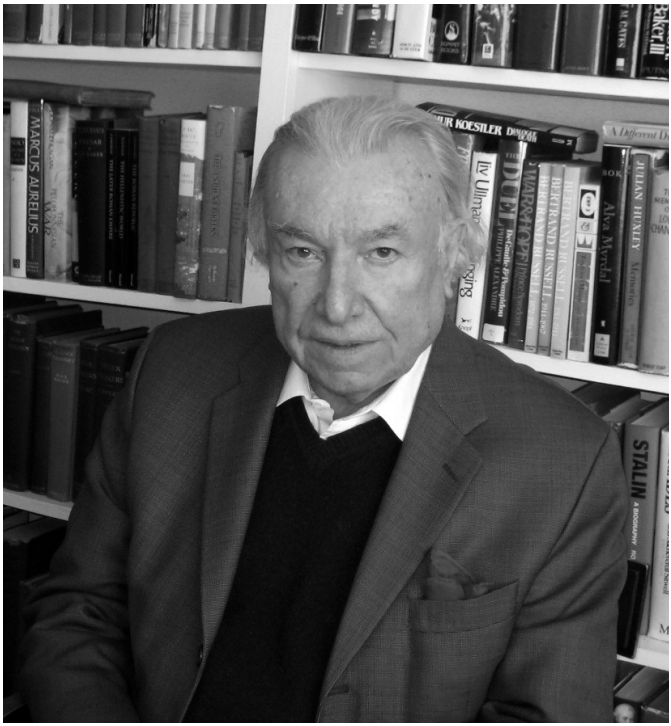
Most of all, we owe the inspiration of this volume to the person to whom it is dedicated, Walid Khalidi.




Walid Khalidi

# Introduction

*Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz*

This collection of essays is dedicated to Walid Khalidi, the teacher, the scholar, and the man. Since his mid-twenties, Professor Khalidi has taught at a number of universities, principally Oxford, the American University of Beirut, and Harvard. His scholarship extends from Islamic studies to modern European history, from Middle Eastern politics, including Palestine, to international relations and strategic and military studies. He not only has headed many teams for specific research projects but also has been the main driving force behind the creation and sustenance of Arab research institutions, at the forefront of which stands the Institute for Palestine Studies, with offices in Beirut, Washington, D.C., Paris, and Jerusalem-Ramallah, four quarterly journals, and a publication list of more than five hundred books and monographs. Finally, Professor Khalidi has been involved, very often behind the scenes, in Palestinian politics and Arab diplomacy. This involvement reflects, certainly, his deep commitment to the Palestinian and Arab causes, though it is not too much to say that it also reflects his attachment to the universal values of justice, freedom, and tolerance, as well as the lessons he has drawn as a scholar from the study of religion, history, political science, and international affairs.*

In their contributions to this volume, colleagues, friends, and former students of Walid Khalidi have written on topics that touch upon facets of his academic interests. Consequently, this volume does not pretend to constitute a tightly coherent whole but rather reflects the diversity and

* See at the end of this book Walid Khalidi's biography and list of publications.

range of Professor Khalidi's concerns. Nonetheless, a certain unity must inevitably underlie a collection of essays linked by the man in whose honor they are written. Many of them address, whether directly or indirectly, and from varying perspectives, some of the central questions that have occupied the minds of twentieth-century Arab intellectuals like Walid Khalidi, who bore witness to—and suffered the consequences of—the series of upheavals that have convulsed the Arab East since 1914. Thus, given the overwhelming intrusiveness of the imperial powers in the region for over two centuries, how is one to assess the Ottoman legacy? Is its impact quite so negative, or does the root of the problem lie more in a certain self-righteousness and insularity said to be embedded in Arab ideological thought from the early twentieth century? And, more pressing, how is one to respond to the challenges arising from imperial domination, from Arab divisions, and, more specifically, in the case of Palestine, from the asymmetry of power that haunts the region?

The contributions in this volume thus can be said to reflect the *transformed landscapes* of the twentieth-century Arab East, in terms of both its configuration and the ways it is interpreted. The essays have been assembled in four main parts. The first includes three essays that present the lives of three Arab personalities who played significant roles in their time and whose ideas, actions, or activities presaged the debates and struggles of our time. Abdul-Karim Rafeq presents ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, a Sufi scholar who resided in Damascus during the second half of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth. In particular, he focuses on al-Nabulsi's writings on religious tolerance, showing, too, how practice of this tolerance with regard to Christians and Jews played out in al-Nabulsi's daily life. Also present in the Sufi scholar's treatises, according to Rafeq, are early expressions of pride in Arabness and cultural belonging, foreshadowing the Arab nationalism to come. Along with this refreshing take on Arab culture, the reader will note that in the 1950s Walid Khalidi himself wrote two biographical studies of al-Nabulsi. The second essay in this grouping, by André Raymond, describes the role played by Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi, a religious scholar from Jerusalem who resided in Cairo at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the period of the popular revolt against the French occupation of Egypt. In a footnote, Professor Raymond remarks that the study of the life of a Palestinian shaykh resisting the foreign occupation of Egypt seems an appropriate way of honoring

Walid Khalidi in his fight for Palestine. The life of Maqdisi also exemplifies the community of language, creed, aspirations, and social values that existed—and, we might argue, still exists—between Palestine and Egypt. Philip S. Khoury, who contributes the third essay of this cluster, presents the political career of an Arab nationalist and Syrian independence leader, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar (1880–1940), whose career he provocatively compares with Khalidi's own as regards family origin, a secular education, a connection to the American University of Beirut, his professional life, and a difficult intermediate position between an emerging Arab world and the west.

The second group of essays includes contributions that challenge traditional views of the Arab East's modern history, as well as traditional ways of writing that history. Thus, Butrus Abu-Manneh, in writing about the changes introduced into the Ottoman system by the first and second Tanzimat periods, shows how these changes forged what would become the institutions and sociopolitical elites of the successor Arab states, an Ottoman legacy that was to remain in place under the advent of the mandatory powers. For his part, 'Adel Manna' focuses on the historiography of the 1834 revolt against Muhammad 'Ali's rule in Palestine not only to show the close relationship between history writing and contemporary prejudices but also to make a strong case for a thorough reevaluation of the anti-Ottoman ideological bias that continues to this day to color common Palestinian (and Arab) perceptions. In a similar vein, Salim Tamari mines the diary of an ordinary Jerusalem soldier conscripted into the Ottoman army during the First World War to challenge the simplistic consensual assumptions of a reigning Arab nationalist anti-Ottomanism. These contributions are particularly fitting for Walid Khalidi, who despite his avowed Arab nationalist leanings has long taken issue with facile interpretations of the Ottoman past.

The last two essays of this second cluster, while challenging traditional ways of writing history, are not concerned with interpretation so much as they are with methodology. Thus, while Issam Nassar's examination of the history of photography in Palestine also implicitly questions stereotypical assessments, his principal aim is to demonstrate the value of photography as an important source material in the study of history. Moreover, by choosing to study the work of local photographers of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Palestine, thereby showing the country through the eyes of its inhabitants as opposed to through western, or Zionist, eyes, he meets Walid Khalidi's concerns as

manifested in the latter's masterly *Before Their Diaspora* (1982). Finally, May Seikaly reminds us of oral history as another source material for historical studies when she excavates the memories of the dispersed inhabitants of a Palestinian village destroyed during the *nakba*—another subject with particular resonance for Walid Khalidi, considered the preeminent Arab historian of the 1948 war.

Khalidi's preoccupation with 1948 and the Zionist project could serve as an introductory framework for the essays that appear in the third cluster of this volume, for they are all situated in the radically transformed landscape that resulted from the cataclysm of the Palestine war. Eric Rouleau draws in part on his personal experience with Gamal Abd al-Nasser and Yasser Arafat to sketch, against the background of the emergence of the Palestinian national movement in an era of Arab nationalism, the sometimes stormy personal relationship between Nasser and the Fatah leadership, especially Arafat. Of particular interest are the Egyptian leader's post-1967 mentoring role and his lessons in realpolitik, subtly pushing Arafat and his comrades in the direction of a two-state accommodation. Complementing Rouleau's contribution, Camille Mansour's overview of Palestinian strategy from the 1948 shock to the 1982 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) withdrawal from Lebanon sees the move toward an acceptance of the statehood goal as an almost inevitable consequence of the reconstruction of the Palestinians' political personality and the ideological and military developments unfolding in the Israeli–Arab arena during that period. It is useful here to link the contributions of both Rouleau and Mansour to Khalidi's seminal article "Thinking the Unthinkable" (*Foreign Affairs*, 1978), in which he forcefully calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In his chapter, Jamil Hilal focuses on the transformation of the Palestinian political elite from the period of the British Mandate to the present, taking into account the changes in the political–institutional context (including the absence of a Palestinian state) and the influence on the elite of factors such as wealth, social status, education, and political activism. Laurie A. Brand concludes this section by addressing the issue of citizenship and identity through analysis of two cases of state behavior toward expatriates: Jordan with its twice-exiled expatriates of Palestinian origin in the Gulf, and Lebanon with its émigrés as a factor influencing the very structure of the state system.

The fourth group features essays that link the Middle East to the international arena. Using British Foreign Office documents, Wm. Roger

Louis looks at the 'Suez decade' (1957–67) in the Middle East from Britain's perspective, emphasizing in particular the impact of the British–French–Israeli tripartite invasion of Egypt—and, more deeply, the impact of Palestine and the enduring legacy of the Balfour Declaration—on the unfolding events. In this context, it is difficult not to recall that it was in protest against Britain's participation in the 1956 aggression that Walid Khalidi abruptly resigned his position as lecturer at Oxford and joined the American University of Beirut. Looking at a longer time frame and through a broader lens, Rashid Khalidi traces the place of the 'Middle East' in what has been referred to as the 'international system' ever since the 1815 Congress of Vienna. In so doing, he demonstrates how, notwithstanding successive restructurings and the supposedly restraining effect of international law, the reigning powers have continued to dominate the 'international order' (the United States, today's dominant superpower, for example, either subordinates or bypasses the United Nations). With regard to the Middle East, the result of this situation has been that the Arab states continue to be more objects than subjects in international affairs. In the last article of this group of essays, Michael C. Hudson focuses exclusively on the United States as the superpower with a virtual monopoly on diplomacy concerning the Palestine problem. While offering a refreshingly original analysis of the structural roots of U.S. policy inadequacy over the decades, he points to certain new factors that suggest possibilities for change.

Finally, Sara Roy's essay on the meaning of Palestine to a child of Holocaust survivors fits into no category. Yet it, too, is fitting for Walid Khalidi. The link Roy makes between the compassion embedded in the Jewish values on which she was nurtured and the Palestinian experience of deprivation and injustice constitutes a vibrant call for hope. It is a call to which Walid Khalidi would surely subscribe.